

HALFMOON TOWNSHIP
Planning Commission Meeting
January 15, 2013 7:00 pm

Present: Danelle Del Corso, Bob Eberhart, Sam Evans, Jordan Finkelstein,
Lorin Nauman, John Stevens, Allen Wilson

Absent: none

Others present: D. J. Liggett, CRPA; Susan Steele, Township Manager

1. Call To Order

Temporary Chair Ms. Steele called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She asked everyone present to introduce themselves, and then explained the reorganization process.

2. Planning Commission Reorganization

a. Appointment of Chairman of the Planning Commission: Motion. Mr. Stevens nominated Ms. Del Corso for Chair. Mr. Nauman seconded. Ms. Del Corso accepted. Vote: 5-0. [Ms. Del Corso did not vote]

[At this time, Ms. Del Corso took over chairing the meeting.]

b. Appointment of Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission: Motion. Mr. Eberhart nominated Mr. Nauman for Vice-Chair. Mr. Stevens seconded. Mr. Nauman accepted. Vote: 5-0. [Mr. Nauman did not vote]

c. Appointment of the Secretary of the Planning Commission: Motion. Mr. Stevens nominated Mr. Finkelstein for Secretary. Mr. Nauman seconded. Mr. Finkelstein accepted. Vote: 5-0. [Mr. Finkelstein did not vote]

d. Appointment to the Centre Regional Planning Commission: Motion. Mr. Eberhart nominated Ms. Del Corso for CRPC Representative and Mr. Evans as alternate. Mr. Finkelstein seconded. Ms. Del Corso and Mr. Evans accepted. Vote: 4-0. [Ms. Del Corso and Mr. Evans did not vote]

e. Appointment to the Township Open Space Board: Motion. Mr. Finkelstein nominated Mr. Eberhart for Representative. Mr. Nauman seconded. Mr. Eberhart accepted. Vote: 5-0. [Mr. Eberhart did not vote]

3. Meeting Date Approval for 2013

Motion. Mr. Nauman moved to approve the Planning Commission meeting dates for the first and third Tuesday of each month in 2013. Mr. Eberhart seconded. Vote: 6-0.

Therefore, the PC is scheduled to meet on the following dates:
January 15

February 5 and 19

March 5 and 19 (March 5 falls during Penn State's Spring Break.)

April 2 and 16

May 7 and 21

June 4 and 18

July 2 and 16

August 6 and 20

September 3 and 17

October 1 and 15

November 12 and 19 (Nov. 5 meeting changed due to election day)

December 3 and 17

4. Citizen Comments

Mr. Finkelstein stated that he thought Township Ordinances, like the lighting ordinance, are not being enforced. Ms. Steele said that if a nuisance complaint is lodged, then that complaint will be investigated. However, the Township does not have a Compliance Officer to patrol the Township to note if ordinances are being enforced. Ms. Del Corso suggested that if Mr. Finkelstein thought a lighting issue was a nuisance, he could submit a complaint and then Township staff would start the investigation process.

Mr. Evans asked if the ordinances are listed on the Township website. Ms. Steele said that they are linked on the website, but if residents have other problems (like a downed tree), they can also call the Township office.

5. Approval of November 20, 2012 Minutes

Motion. Mr. Finkelstein moved to approve the minutes of November 20, 2012. Mr. Nauman seconded. Vote: 6-0.

6. Reports

a. BOS Update

Ms. Steele said BOS held their reorganization meeting. She also said there is web training available for new committee members, offered through the Pennsylvania League. This training helps give an orientation of existing ordinances and the PC's role in the municipal process. Ms. Steel can get the password so new members can do the webinar training at their leisure. Also, Mr. Finkelstein had previously prepared a list of planning acronyms and offered to share them with Mr. Evans and Mr. Wilson.

b. Zoning Officer's Report

None.

c. CRPC Update

Ms. Liggett explained that she is part of the Centre Regional Planning Agency

(CRPA), which provides three types of planning services (transportation, regional planning, and local planning) to local municipalities. Ms. Steele said that one challenge of this area is that each municipality has its own zoning; however, sometimes issues arise that need to be handled at the regional level.

Ms. Del Corso said the Centre Regional Planning Commission (CRPC) held their first meeting in January. The CRPC discussed the Comprehensive Plan and will hold their reorganization meeting in February. Ms. Del Corso has been nominated to serve as CRPC Chair.

Mr. Stevens and Mr. Eberhart noted that in their collective memory, there has never been a CRPC Chair from Halfmoon Township, so this is quite an achievement!

d. Open Space Report

Mr. Eberhart asked to have this report added to the agenda, because the OSP has undergone some major changes recently. Ms. Steele said that it was budgeted for this year that no new properties or advances will be paid for FY2013. The Township has hired an expert in Act 153 issues to ensure that Township policies will adhere to the referendum language.

7. Fire Protection Regulations

Ms. Del Corso reviewed the November 20, 2012 PC meeting in which the Port Matilda and Warriors Mark Volunteer Fire Company chiefs shared their ideas on practical fire protection and which regulations would help them during fire suppression. Ms. Del Corso reminded the PC that the fire chiefs had stated they did not use the water cisterns for fire suppression, so her suggestion was to remove the water cistern requirement for new construction.

The first potential change discussed was whether to reinstate the four-lot subdivision exemption for fire protection. Originally, if a subdivision was 4 lots or less, then it would be exempt from the fire protection regulations. When the Township ordinance was codified, this language was left out. Because of that, every time a single house subdivision is built and not located on a community water system that meets fire protection standards, the owners are required to install a sprinkler system or provide on-site water storage (4,000 gallons for a cistern, 10,000 gallons for a pond/permanent pool). Ms. Liggett said the fire chiefs were not against using the cisterns but they prefer to shuttle their own water in tanks. Ms. Steele said that since some areas of the Township are outside a community water service area, installing a water supply on your property could help protect your property from fire.

Mr. Nauman said he supported reinstating the four-lot exemption to keep it consistent with the Rural Preservation ordinance and the private road regulation. Mr. Eberhart did not see why any houses should be exempted, if this was to save lives and property. Mr. Nauman then suggested that if cisterns were so effective, the PC should make this retroactive and require all residences to install cisterns. His point

was there is more fire protection built into new construction than existing older homes have.

Ms. Del Corso asked if any members had a strong opposition to reinstating the four-lot exemption, and Mr. Eberhart said he opposed any exemption. Mr. Eberhart also remembered that Mr. Fennessey would have supported this exemption because he did not believe people should be required to build something they don't want to have. Mr. Wilson asked why the exemption was missing from the codification. Ms. Steele said she did not know if it was a Code error or a staff error, but the language was not kept in the codification and now the Township has to live by the ordinances as written.

Ms. Del Corso reviewed the issue with the cisterns: the Township requires cisterns or sprinklers, but no one monitors the maintenance or maps their locations and the two fire companies primarily responsible for covering the Township do not utilize onsite cisterns. Therefore, the question is, why is the Township requiring something that may not work when needed and no one is actually using? Ms. Del Corso and Mr. Stevens spoke in favor of eliminating the cistern requirement. Ms. Liggett said that if the Township wants to keep this requirement, the CRPA would assist with mapping the locations of cisterns and the Code Office could be asked to inspect the cisterns.

Motion. Mr. Evans moved that the PC recommend the BOS eliminate the cistern requirement from the fire protection regulations, but if they approve keeping the requirement, that appropriate inspections, mapping, etc. be provided . Mr. Stevens seconded. Vote: 6-0.

Ms. Liggett then said that the fire chiefs said they need a minimum cartway width of 12 feet on shared driveways. On private roads, they recommended a cartway width of 12 feet with 2-foot shoulders on each side to help vehicles to pass safely, so the private road cartway width would be 16 feet. The chiefs also said the roads do not need to support 75,000 pounds; if the road can support the concrete truck used to do the foundation, the road will support their fire trucks. The chiefs recommended eliminating the weight restriction on shared driveways and private roads. Mr. Nauman suggested adding "mud-free" or "packed gravel surface" to the private road requirement. Ms. Liggett noted that the regulations for private streets already require a mud-free surface.

Motion. Mr. Nauman moved that the PC recommend the BOS eliminate the 75,000 pound weight restriction on roads, change the width requirements (12 foot cartway for shared driveways, 12 foot cartway, plus 2 foot shoulders on each side for private roads), and not regulate road surfaces in the fire protection regulations. Mr. Finkelstein seconded. Vote: 6-0.

Ms. Del Corso asked members to discuss the issue of connections to an existing

community water system. Ms. Liggett said the Township cannot require a private water company to serve a new development. For example, Trotter Farm has a private water system because at the time of construction, the developers could not be required to connect to the Upper Halfmoon Water Company, which is a private company. The most the Township could do as part of the land development process, is encourage developers to meet with the nearest private water company to explore options for water service. The private water company could determine whether there is capacity to serve the new development and could certify whether it meets fire protection standards for water flow. Ms. Liggett said a letter documenting the inquiry could be provided by the developer with the plan submission.

Motion. Mr. Eberhart moved that the PC recommend the BOS add a requirement to the fire protection regulations requiring any property owner subdividing his property to produce a letter from the nearest water system discussing water connections. Mr. Finkelstein seconded. Vote: 6-0.

Ms. Del Corso then discussed the four-lot exemption in the fire protection regulations. Mr. Eberhart questioned reinstating the exemption because he thought each individual house should be required to provide its own fire protection. Ms. Liggett said the four-lot exemption applied to the requirement that a water storage tank be installed in developments outside a community water system. Mr. Nauman explained that the other option was installing a sprinkler system, which the PC might need to recommend eliminating. Pennsylvania does not allow a municipality to only offer one option of required services to a homeowner; if the Township removes the cistern requirement, it will also need to remove the sprinkler requirement. Members then discussed that if the BOS accepts the last three PC motions, then the issue of the four-lot exemption is a moot point since the fire regulations are limited to road width standards. Members decided that no motion was needed regarding the four-lot exemption.

Mr. Nauman reviewed the issue of connecting to an existing water system, and stated that even the Upper Halfmoon Township Water Company cannot certify that they meet the fire protection standards. He asked why the PC would require a developer to obtain a letter stating that the water company could not service the development. Members decided to strike the recommendation to the BOS that a developer is required to communicate with the water company since it is already a known fact that the supply is inadequate. Ms. Steele and Ms. Liggett will prepare the revisions to the fire protection regulations and present it at the next PC meeting.

8. Draft Centre Region Comprehensive Plan Update – Review Process

Ms. Liggett distributed copies of the DRAFT Centre Region Comprehensive Plan for members to read and mark up for the February 5 PC meeting. The Future Land Use maps are located in the last few pages of the book, so PC members can refer to them for discussion. Ms. Liggett reviewed previous discussions for Mr. Allen and Mr.

Wilson, noting that the PC has discussed proposed locations for higher density zoning to broaden the tax base. The locations that might make the most sense are around Stormstown or adjacent to Patton Township since there is no public sewer in the Township. If mixed use development were to occur, the area adjacent to Patton Township would be easier to connect to the necessary services.

Ms. Liggett asked members to highlight or note items that are of particular interest to the Township, and consider short term (1-3 years), mid-term, or long-term needs. She then asked members to consider the following as they reviewed the Comprehensive Plan for the next PC meeting:

- What should the Township pursue?
- What should the Township work with the Region to pursue?
- What things should the Township focus on in the next 1-3 years?

9. Matters of Record

- The BOS will hold two open house meetings to present the Official Map to residents in an informal setting prior to a formal public hearing. The sessions will be held on Monday, January 28 from 1-3 p.m. and on Tuesday, January 29 from 7-9 p.m. In addition to the Official Map, the Future Land Use Map will also be presented. The PC members are invited to attend these open house meetings. The recommended changes to the Official Map include proposed shared roads, trail connections, and future parkland.
- The next PC meeting is scheduled for February 5. Agenda items will include the 2012 Annual Report (submitted by Ms. Del Corso), the 2013 work program, and the Centre Region Comprehensive Plan. After discussion, the 2013 work program item may wait for discussion until March when other issues are decided.
- Ms. Liggett mentioned that Mr. Maloney has resubmitted his updated planning module to DEP for his 5-lot country lot subdivision.

10. Adjournment

Motion. Mr. Finkelstein moved to adjourn. Mr. Stevens seconded. Vote: 6-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Gartner
Recording Secretary